

## Museum And Gallery

# 'Collision' showcases scatter art at the RISD Museum

### Chaotic collection

By GREG COOK | January 25, 2011



AN "IMPROMPTU PERFORMANCE" A sampling of the gesamtkunstwerk in the Farago Gallery.

"Collision," in which 17 artists were invited to install pretty much whatever they wanted in the RISD Museum of Art's Farago Gallery (224 Benefit Street, Providence, through June 19), typifies one of the major flavors of art of the past decade.

The style has been dubbed "Scatter Art" (or "Scatter Trash" by less charitable observers) because it generally involves seemingly random assemblages of junk, often garnished willy-nilly with spray paint. Rachel Harrison has become the paragon of Scatter Art with her absurdist sculptures of, say, a naked child mannequin in an Abraham Lincoln mask holding a Nascar trash can and standing on a papier-mâché boulder badly painted in rainbow hues. The defining survey of this stuff was the exhibit "UnMonumental" at the New Museum in New York in 2007.

Scatter Art comes out of Robert Rauschenberg's "combines," which were descendents of Dadaist collage. But it also echoes the Internet's glut of data. The experience of this art is something like when you spend a lot of time randomly surfing the Web and end up feeling empty and anxious and chagrined for wasting your time on such trivia.

The difference here is that a bunch of artists supply their own art as the raw materials for a room-filling Scatter Art gesamtkunstwerk. Painter Jackie Saccoccio, who served as ringmaster at the invitation of RISD Museum curator Judith Tannenbaum, described the three-week installation of the art as an "impromptu performance," in which artists "scheduled early in the installation period had the advantage of more space to choose from, but they also had to be willing to have their works covered or destroyed by succeeding artists."

Nicole Cherubini makes ceramic versions of cardboard boxes displayed on pedestals haphazardly splattered with paint. Saccoccio and Nader Tehrani wallpaper the gallery with a print that looks like someone testing a pen to make sure it works. Marilyn Minter screens a video of someone seemingly licking blue and green goop off the camera lens. Susan Jennings dangles scraps of silvery mylar and plastic shards from the ceiling. Lucky

DeBellevue makes tinsel spiderwebs.

Doug Wada presents a flatfooted realist painting of a pile of plastic trash bags. A la Rachel Harrison, Jeffrey Gibson drops globs of urethane foam onto a child mannequin and then spray paints it all with drippy silver, black, and pink. Gibson also wallpapers one wall with a pattern of geometric shapes filled with black and white stripes. Atop this he hangs paintings featuring the same patterns with red, blue, and yellow paint haphazardly sprayed atop them. They seem like purposely halfassed knockoffs of 1980s knockoffs of 1910s geometric abstractions. Call it late Post-Modernist Mannerism.

Some pieces do stand out. Carl D'Alvia's bronze *Slab* is a rectangular bar bent up at one end, its surface covered with a hairy pattern for a fun Minimalist Surreal effect. And Saccoccio's twin oil paintings of black, blue, violet, and white drippy blobs show that Abstract Expressionism can still be vital.